

PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE ARMENIAN-AMERICAN CULTURAL SOCIETY OF LAS VEGAS

**HON. JON C. PORTER**

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 25, 2006*

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Armenian-American Cultural Society of Las Vegas on this, the 91st anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. This organization was established in 1978, and since that time has grown in size and influence. They are now the largest non-political, non-denominational organization in Nevada. They have worked tirelessly to educate the general public about the atrocious acts committed against their people and also to help preserve the Armenian culture here in Las Vegas and America.

I am proud to represent a large and vibrant Armenian community in the Third Congressional District of Nevada and I consider it an honor to have been invited to participate in the ceremonies commemorating the 91st anniversary of the Armenian genocide. These ceremonies offer participants an opportunity to honor the survivors and their descendants, and to remind the world of the tragedy that befell Armenians of the Ottoman Empire.

It is estimated that one and a half million Armenians perished between 1915 and 1923 in a genocide planned and executed by the Turkish government against the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. The great bulk of the Armenian population was removed from Armenia and Anatolia to Syria, where the vast majority was sent into the desert to die of thirst and hunger. Large numbers of Armenians were methodically massacred throughout the Ottoman Empire. The entire wealth of the Armenian people was expropriated. After only a little more than a year of calm at the end of WWI, the atrocities were renewed between 1920 and 1923, and the remaining Armenians were subjected to further massacres and expulsions.

While there are still many who deny that the Armenian Genocide ever took place, I am pleased to see more and more countries and states and even the media are now in the process of recognizing the genocide. It is critical that we reflect on this human tragedy and on the lessons of history and work to avoid the horrors faced by the Armenian people in 1915.

H.R. 3380—THE GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE PROMOTION AND KINSHIP SUPPORT ACT

**HON. ZOE LOFGREN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 25, 2006*

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and honor the 294,969 California grandparents as well as 2.4 million grandparents around the Nation who act as primary guardians to grandchildren that are unable to live with their parents. As a result of the service and efforts of these individuals, many children around California and the country are able to live with relatives and stay out of the foster care system.

According to the Census of 2000, 6.8 percent of California's children are living in grandparent-headed households as well as an additional 3.5 percent living in households headed by other non-parent relatives. I commend the efforts these relatives take in providing a safe and familiar living environment for these children.

However, now more than ever, I also recognize the financial hardships and personal sacrifices faced by these guardians. As a cosponsor of H.R. 3380, The Guardianship Assistance Promotion and Kinship Support Act, I am committed to working toward a solution that will help to alleviate these financial burdens placed on guardians and give them access to Federal funds that they deserve.

Today, on behalf of the constituents of the 16th District of California, I extend my deepest appreciation to these exceptional guardians. It is an honor to have many of these individuals in my own district whose care and commitment to vulnerable children help to build a better future for them.

IN RECOGNITION OF COUNTY CONNECTION'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

**HON. ELLEN O. TAUSCHER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 25, 2006*

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleague, Representative GEORGE MILLER, to pay tribute to County Connection, the public bus system provider that serves more than a dozen communities and unincorporated areas of central Contra Costa County in our two Congressional Districts.

County Connection was founded on March 27, 1980 under a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement. After several years of careful planning, locally elected officials in Central Contra Costa recognized the need for a truly coordinated and integrated regional transit system.

County Connection began providing service with 12 buses, carrying 1,950,000 passengers, traveling 1,423,357 miles. In just its first ten years, the agency multiplied its fleet of buses ten fold. Today, the transportation agency maintains a current fleet of 131 buses and 56 LINK vans, makes nearly 5,000,000 fixed-route and paratransit trips throughout central Contra Costa and provides 4.5 million rides annually.

The system is now overseen by an 11-member Board of Directors, one representative from each jurisdiction and one representative for the unincorporated areas of Central County.

Since its establishment, County Connection has received numerous prestigious awards including: the American Public Transit Association (APTA) Minority & Women Advancement Award for its meritorious accomplishments in the employment, promotion and training of minorities and women in management positions, and this year, the California Water Environment Association recognized the agency with its "Facility of the Year" award in recognition for going above and beyond normal efforts to protect susceptible plant and wildlife that survive in local streams.

For 25 years, County Connection has provided vital transportation services to residents throughout Central Contra Costa. As the popu-

lation of this County grows, the services provided by County Connection have never been needed more. Each day agency buses help people get to their work, return home, and in general provide a service that no other program in the community can. Today, we are proud to commend County Connection for the agency's service to the community and its lasting commitment to the people of Contra Costa County.

MGIB LEGISLATION

**HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 25, 2006*

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address an inequity facing America's men and women in uniform who seek an education in return for their military service.

For years, the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) has allowed thousands of men and women in uniform attend college or to receive vocational training to prepare for a new career after the military.

It is an excellent program and one we must preserve.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remedy an inequity that exists in this program with legislation I am introducing today.

To receive the benefits of the Montgomery GI Bill, our service members must pay \$1,200 to \$1,800 into the program at the beginning of their military service.

A \$100 is deducted each month from their military pay for the first 12 months, for example.

With the legislation I offer today, our service members would still make the initial contribution. However, this contribution would no longer count against them later on when they apply for federal student aid.

In many cases, Mr. Speaker, the Montgomery GI Bill alone does not cover the cost for college or job training. Our service members must also apply for federal student aid to cover tuition and other expenses.

The Department of Education considers their benefits from the Montgomery GI Bill as "income"—thereby reducing the amount they are eligible to receive from federal student aid programs.

This legislation goes back to the \$1,200 out-of-pocket contribution that a service member made to become eligible for the Montgomery GI Bill.

It is not fair to ask our service members to pay the original amount out of their own pocket and then penalize them for it later on.

This bill would simply exempt the original contribution that came from their own pocket from the Department of Education's income consideration.

This legislation does not present significant cost to the federal government but would go a long way to help America's individual service members afford college.

I offered the provisions contained in this legislation as part of the College Access and Opportunity Act (H.R. 609) when it was on the House floor.

Unfortunately, the amendment was not accepted, but I plan to pursue the issue until we correct this inequity.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take just a moment to thank those who have worked on